

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE—VOTE ON  
AMENDMENT NO. 2305

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, prior to the noon hour today, the Senate cast a roll call vote on our colleague Senator DODD's amendment No. 2305 to H.R. 2646, the Coverdell Education bill. This vote to waive the Budget Act with respect to the Dodd amendment failed by a vote of 46-53. I was unavoidably detained in the Physician's Office of the Capitol, but would have voted against waiving the Budget Act. My vote would not have altered the final outcome of the vote.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, just so all Members will be aware of what we are talking about at this point—and I do not have a unanimous consent request ready at this moment, but I will have one momentarily for Senator DASCHLE to review—we will be having additional votes tonight. We try to accommodate Senators' schedules, but we believe we can get an agreement for final debate on the education bill and then have a recorded vote. That I presume would occur sometime around 7 o'clock, or earlier if some time is yielded back. That will be followed, if we can enter the agreement, by a debate of approximately 30 minutes on the resolution dealing with Northern Ireland and a vote after that.

I assume we will have then two additional votes tonight, and then we will have a further announcement about the schedule on Friday, but with no recorded votes on Friday, and Monday with likely recorded votes, at least a vote at 5:30 on Monday. But we will have that for each leader to review momentarily, and we will be asking for consent to that effect.

I yield the floor. Is any Senator seeking recognition?

I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. In the interest of making sure we utilize all time that is available, we have here and ready to speak Senators who are interested in the resolution with regard to Ireland.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE HISTORIC  
NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE  
AGREEMENT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the current resolution regarding Ireland; that there be 30 minutes for debate only, equally divided between the majority and minority leaders or their designees; that no motions or amendments be in order, and at the conclusion of yielding back of time, we have the vote on the resolution on Ireland immediately following the education vote. So it would be

stacked, those two—first the education vote and then the vote on the Ireland resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. I yield the floor, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Con. Res. 90) to acknowledge the historic Northern Ireland peace agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. DODD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

The Senator controls 15 minutes on his side.

Mr. DODD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I offer this resolution on behalf of myself, Senators KENNEDY, MOYNIHAN; the Democrat leader, Senator DASCHLE; Senator LEAHY; Senator LAUTENBERG; Senator KERRY; Senator MACK; Senator D'AMATO; Senator HARKIN; and Senator BIDEN.

Mr. President, today we are here considering this resolution when there are renewed hopes for peace in Northern Ireland, hopes that spring from the successful conclusion of 22 months of negotiations on April 10, Good Friday. I do not think it was mere coincidence that it was during Holy Week, one of the most sacred periods in the Christian calendar, that this small miracle occurred, the possibility of peace, political stability, and reconciliation for the 1.6 million people who reside in the six counties of Northern Ireland. Many people deserve credit and congratulations for making this small miracle possible.

First, we should commend the individuals who participated in the peace process for more than 3 years and stayed the course. It took courage on their parts, as Senator Mitchell noted, "to compete in the arena of democracy."

I think it is fair to say that one of the giants over the years in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland peace efforts has been John Hume of Derry, a long-time civil rights crusader and respected leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party. John Hume deserves great praise for his tireless efforts over the past 30 years to bring peace to his people. David Trimble, president of the Ulster Unionist Party, and Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, were also indispensable in making a final agreement possible.

They, along with other participants, deserve enormous credit for their persistence and determination, for their willingness to make honorable compromises so that the people of Ireland can look forward to a day when hatred and bloodshed are not part of their daily landscape.

Let me also take a moment, if I may, to mention a few of the other key actors in this drama who warrant special

recognition. First, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who made the search for peace one of his first priorities upon assuming office last year. He did so because he believed that the people of Belfast "deserve a better future than a life of bloodshed, murder and disharmony."

Equally important to the success of the process was the Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, also was new to the office, who inspired trust and confidence in the nationalist community. They knew of his commitment to ensuring that any final agreement would protect and guarantee the rights, freedoms, and traditions of the Irish Catholic minority in the north.

It goes without saying that the American people can be justifiably proud of the role played by President Clinton throughout the process. Were it not for the President's vision, perseverance, and unwillingness to give up on the negotiations, we would not be here today talking about a new chapter in the history of Northern Ireland.

Perhaps President Clinton refused to be discouraged because he had looked into the eyes of so many men and women during his visit to Belfast in 1995 and saw how deeply they yearned for peace, most especially peace for their children.

Last but not least, there was Senator George Mitchell, our former colleague, who shepherded the parties to an agreement. As someone who served with Senator Mitchell, it came as no surprise to me that George found a way to overcome what at times appeared to be insurmountable differences among the parties.

With patience, evenhandedness and acute political skills, Senator Mitchell guided and empowered the parties to find common ground and finalize an agreement.

The tireless efforts of Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith should also be acknowledged. She was there at every turn to keep everyone focused on what was happening throughout the process, and to ensure that at appropriate moments, the necessary encouragement from the United States was forthcoming.

I should mention as well that our own colleague, Senator EDWARD KENNEDY of Massachusetts, played a very, very important role over many years to encourage a political and peaceful resolution of the problems in the north.

There have been others of our colleagues here in this Chamber, Senator MOYNIHAN of New York, Senator LEAHY of Vermont, Senator MACK of Florida, and in the other body PETER KING of New York, Congressman NEAL of Massachusetts, BEN GILMAN, of New York, JOE KENNEDY of Massachusetts all of whom have been deeply committed to finding a peaceful solution to Ireland's Troubles. I know there are others as well, but these are the names that come to mind immediately who, for many, many years sought to bring

about a political and peaceful resolution to the violence in the north.

The 67-page final document is a complex mosaic of provisions that endeavor to address the interests and concerns of the two Northern Ireland communities, Protestant and Catholic, within a framework of democracy, justice and equal rights.

The April 10 agreement is in many ways the culmination of more than a decade of efforts by the British and Irish governments to broker peace in the conflicted North. The 1985 Anglo-Irish Accord, the 1993 Joint Declaration, and the 1995 New Framework for Agreement were all important milestones on the road to peace.

Perhaps the secret of success on this occasion was that all of the parties to the conflict were represented in the negotiations—each side setting forth for itself its concerns and aspirations. Those concerns and aspirations have in turn been interwoven into the final text of the accord.

The August 1994, IRA cease-fire and the cease-fire by the Combined Loyalist Military Command that followed shortly thereafter created the opportunity for these all inclusive negotiations to take place.

There were clearly anxious moments over the last several years during the quest for peace. To be sure, at times the setbacks and disappointments that followed the promise of the 1994 cease-fire announcements, left all of us despairing that the situation was without hope.

You will recall, for example, that the peace process was dealt a near fatal blow on February 9, 1996, with the detonation of an IRA bomb in London—a blast that injured scores of innocent people.

Frankly, until the restoration of the IRA cease-fire last July, the Northern Ireland peace process had hit bottom, it had reached the point where, in the words of Irish poet Seamus Heaney, "bad news is no longer news."

We are now once again at a turning point in the history of Northern Ireland. The possibility of peace is as real as it has ever been.

As President Clinton has so aptly observed, "to engage in serious negotiations, to be willing to make principled compromises, requires courage and creativity."

The political leaders of Northern Ireland demonstrated that courage and creativity in finalizing this agreement.

It is now up to the people of Ireland—North and South—to ratify that agreement in the upcoming referendums. More importantly, it rests in their hands and hearts to make the words on that 67-page peace accord make a difference in the daily lives of every man, woman and child who calls Northern Ireland home.

On this day and in this Chamber, with what I hope will be the unanimous endorsement of every one of our colleagues, I pray, as everyone else does, that the people of Northern Ireland

will have the courage, wisdom and foresight to do that.

Mr. President, I know my colleague, Senator KENNEDY, is here on the floor. If there is additional time, I ask unanimous consent for another 5 or 10 additional minutes for people to be heard on this issue if it is appropriate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 6½ minutes remaining. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. President, it's a privilege to join my colleagues Senators DODD, MOYNIHAN, KERRY, LEAHY, LAUTENBERG, DASCHLE, MACK, and D'AMATO in sponsoring this resolution, which commends the many leaders responsible for the achievement of the recent historic peace agreement in Northern Ireland.

The agreement reached on Good Friday marks a turning point in the history of Northern Ireland. For too long, it has been a land synonymous with bloodshed, violence and hatred. But now Northern Ireland stands as an example to the world that agreement between differing ethnic and national groups is attainable.

The current Troubles in Northern Ireland began in 1969 and raged mercilessly in the following decades, to the great distress of the many citizens there who wanted only peace and justice.

Many efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement over the years were unsuccessful. But finally, in December 1993, the two governments issued a Joint Declaration, making it clear that if the groups resorting to violence declared ceasefires, their political representatives could join all-inclusive talks on Northern Ireland's future. The time was ripe, and a hopeful formula for peace had been found.

I also want to especially credit John Hume, who for years tirelessly worked for peace in Northern Ireland. No one's contribution has been greater. When the final history is written, the name of John Hume will stand first.

The courageous decision by President Clinton to grant a visa for Gerry Adams to visit the United States in early 1994 was a key step leading to the decision by the Irish Republican Army to declare a ceasefire in August of that year, and the Loyalist paramilitaries did the same in October 1994.

In the years that followed, there were many obstacles, setbacks, and crises to be overcome, but the parties never lost sight of the goal of the peace.

A new British Government under Prime Minister Tony Blair was elected in May 1997, and a new Irish Government under Taoiseach Bertie Ahern came to power in June. Both leaders and especially Secretary of State Marjorie Mowlan committed themselves to peace, and worked skillfully and effectively to achieve it.

Negotiations including Sinn Fein and chaired by our former Senate colleague George Mitchell began, and Senator Mitchell's patience and determination were critical in guiding the talks to a successful conclusion.

Great credit also goes to Taoiseach Ahern and Prime Minister Blair. They made Northern Ireland their high priority, and constantly urged the parties to keep moving forward to agreement. President Clinton's continuing strong support was also indispensable in the success that was finally achieved.

The participants in the talks also deserve great credit. They had the courage to negotiate and to produce a fair agreement that reflects the aspirations of Nationalists and Unionists alike.

On May 22, the agreement will be voted on in separate referendums by the people of Ireland, North and South. Last Saturday, David Trimble succeeded in obtaining the overwhelming endorsement of the Ulster Unionist Party for the agreement. I hope that the leaders of all the parties will work as hard and as effectively for a "yes" vote to convince their followers of the merits of this agreement.

Hopefully, the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland will approve the agreement in the referendums to be held next month, so that implementation of the agreement can begin.

An Assembly must be elected. Changes must be made in the policing and the criminal justice systems to reassure both Nationalists and Unionists that they will receive equal protection under the law. Nationalists and Unionists will have to work together in partnership. After decades of animosity, this challenge is still very real, but Northern Ireland's parties can rise to meet it, as the events of Good Friday have proved. And they will have the continuing support of the United States as they do so.

I thank the majority leader for scheduling this in an extremely pressed time. Given the recent decisions that have been made, it is entirely appropriate that the Senate speak on this issue. We are very, very appreciative of the majority leader giving us the time in a very busy time to consider this resolution and support it.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, if my colleague will yield, I also thank the majority leader. I know the pressures he is under. Everything is terribly important. As my colleague from Massachusetts said, he is gracious to allow us to bring this up at this particular time.

I ask—I know there are others, including our colleagues from Florida, New York and others, who want to be heard on this issue who may not be able to make it over to speak—that the RECORD be left open so their comments on the resolution appear prior to the adoption of the resolution.

If it is appropriate, I ask for the yeas and nays on this resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, for those Senators who would like to have their statements on this resolution inserted, that they be inserted at this point in the RECORD. I

know Senator MACK, who had gotten away before we made these arrangements, would like his remarks included at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my support to the Resolution being debated on the floor this afternoon. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this important statement of Senate support for the Northern Ireland peace agreement. Like my colleagues, I believe the settlement in Northern Ireland is an historic opportunity to bring peace to a remarkable people that have suffered from violence for far too long. And as a nation with deep cultural ties and personal attachment to Ireland, I believe we can all take a moment to be hopeful that a new era of peace and prosperity in Northern Ireland is now possible.

First, I would also like to use this opportunity to offer my congratulations to our former colleague George Mitchell for his role as Independent Chairman of the multiparty talks. Despite long odds and numerous setbacks, Senator Mitchell has demonstrated diplomatic skills that can only be learned by being Majority Leader of the Senate. His actions have truly been a credit to our nation.

Mr. President, for the first time in centuries there is hope that a lasting peace can be achieved in Northern Ireland—I think our words today fail to capture the importance of this opportunity. The agreements that led to the April 10 accord are the result of brave actions by both Protestant and Catholic political leaders, and the desire to find a solution to the cycle of violence that has virtually imprisoned all of the people of Northern Ireland for decades. I am confident, when given the chance to vote in the May 22 referendum, the people of Ireland will take the opportunity to send a strong message to their political leaders of their desire to continue to move forward in this process.

In our euphoria over the recent agreements, we must not forget that lasting peace will only come with continued diligence. We must not allow the opponents of peace in Northern Ireland to use terrorism to destroy what has been painstakingly built so far. Mr. President, with our strong support for this resolution we send an unmistakable signal of our willingness to continue to work with any and all people in Northern Ireland dedicated to bringing about a peaceful and lasting settlement.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President. I rise as an original sponsor of the resolution acknowledging the historic Northern Ireland peace agreement. In adopting this resolution, the Senate will demonstrate its strong support for this agreement which has been so long in coming.

When I first came to the Senate in 1977, Senator KENNEDY, Speaker O'Neill, then-Governor Hugh Carey of

New York, and I joined together and issued this St. Patrick's Day statement:

We appeal to all those organizations engaged in violence to renounce their campaigns of death and destruction and return to the path of life and peace. And we appeal as well to our fellow Americans to embrace this goal of peace, and to renounce any action that promotes the current violence or provides support or encouragement for organizations engaged in violence.

Now, finally, one of the oldest conflicts in Europe has the potential of healing and being resolved. A courageous agreement has been reached in Northern Ireland. We in the United States Senate can be particularly proud of the role that our former colleague and leader George Mitchell played in mediating this agreement. He deserves no less than the Nobel Peace Prize.

The search for a just and lasting peace in Northern Ireland has entered a most promising stage. This resolution indicates the strong support of the United States Senate for this historic agreement. May it fulfill our hopes.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), and the Senator from New York (Mr. MOYNIHAN) for introducing S. Con. Res. 90, which acknowledges the historic Northern Ireland peace agreement, and congratulates the individuals who made the agreement possible.

Just today, in my home state of Wisconsin, leaders representing all sides of the Northern Ireland peace process gathered in Milwaukee for a National Symposium on Prospects for Peace in Northern Ireland, sponsored by the George F. Kennan Forum on International Affairs. Mr. President, this conference was planned long before the historic peace agreement was announced. I am pleased that the attendees were able to come to Milwaukee with a viable agreement already on the table. The speakers at today's conference, who were involved in the negotiations of the peace agreement, discussed both the agreement itself and prospects for a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

In light of this resolution, I want to repeat some of my remarks for the peace symposium.

The recent agreement reached by the parties to the conflict in Northern Ireland offers real hope for an end to three decades of violence in that troubled land. This historic step is the product of a new commitment to peace by parties on all sides of this longstanding conflict.

It is proper that this resolution commends President Clinton for making the search for an end to the conflict in Northern Ireland a top foreign policy priority. My former colleague, Senator George Mitchell, deserves special recognition from this body for his leadership in helping move the parties to an agreement. Above all, we commend the

leaders from all sides of this conflict, many of whom worked tirelessly on this agreement, and had the will to put ancient hatreds aside and make peace their priority.

Now the success of the agreement rests in the hands of the people of Northern Ireland, who continue to review the details and, eventually, will have the opportunity to express themselves democratically through a referendum. Let us hope that all the parties will be able to commit to this process and that none will turn to the sectarian violence of the past. It is now the duty of all who seek peace to resist the efforts of those who may seek to undermine the accords through violence.

As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I believe this agreement signals new hope for long-standing conflicts around in the world. Just a few years ago, many saw the conflicts in South Africa and Northern Ireland as intractable, but today one has been peacefully resolved and the other has made tremendous progress, as we recognize with this resolution.

So, Mr. President, I am happy to support this resolution with hope for the future, and commend the brave leaders who have taken a risk for peace in Northern Ireland.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, on Good Friday a landmark agreement was reached in Northern Ireland to start down the road to bring to an end decades of violent hostilities, and reshape fundamentally the political institutions of that province. All Americans have reason to be very pleased that the many competing political factions in Northern Ireland were able to resolve their longstanding, bitter disagreements.

Today I want to express my particular appreciation of the splendid efforts of President Clinton's Special Advisor on Ireland, former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. It comes as no surprise to me that those closest to these negotiations believe that were it not for the tireless efforts of Senator Mitchell, this agreement would not have been reached. Having worked with Senator Mitchell for nearly fifteen years on many complex issues, I can certainly attest to his unique ability to forge an agreement that most thought unachievable.

Senator Mitchell's many fine attributes served him well in the U.S. Senate, and helped prepare him for the tremendous challenges he faced as chairman of the multi-party talks in Northern Ireland:

He has the patience to listen to the contentions of people whose differences have existed for some three hundred years. Twenty-two months of talks may well have worn out a less capable, less disciplined person.

Senator Mitchell also brought with him to Belfast the Senate's respect for full and fair debate. As chairman of these talks, he ensured that all voices at the table were permitted to speak.

He knew well that in the end, a successful agreement required that all parties felt that they had been listened to.

He possesses unrivaled negotiating skills. When needed, Senator Mitchell called upon Prime Ministers Blair of Great Britain and Ahern of Ireland, as well as President Clinton, in order to urge the participants to keep the talks alive. He also had the strategic thinking to set a deadline to end the talks.

Senator Mitchell was persistent in bringing about this agreement. Despite the long odds, he never gave up in his core belief that newborn children in Northern Ireland deserve the same chance as his six-month-old son to have peace, stability and reconciliation.

Finally, Senator Mitchell believed in compromise. Unionists and nationalists were clearly far apart when these talks began, as they had been for decades. Senator Mitchell was able to forge an agreement that gave just enough to both sides so that each could declare victory. Indeed, this ability to bridge differences helped create our very nation, as our Founding Fathers crafted a Constitution that satisfied the big states—that sought representation by population—and the small states, that sought representation by states.

Mr. President, George Mitchell's accomplishment in Northern Ireland makes us all very proud of him and proud of American values and ideals. In announcing the Good Friday Agreement, he stated, "it doesn't take courage to shoot a policeman in the back of the head, or to murder an unarmed taxi driver. What takes courage is to compete in the arena of democracy as these men and women are tonight."

Senator Mitchell knows the value of this competition of ideas from his days in this institution. He recognizes that a government which upholds this competition of ideas serves its people best. The people of Northern Ireland have recognized this basic truth as well. We salute George Mitchell, a true statesman who has helped begin the end of one of the world's most intractable conflicts.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I rise to express my support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 90, which acknowledges the historic Northern Ireland Peace Agreement reached just two weeks ago.

Both the governments of the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom have worked for many years to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Northern Ireland that has cost so many lives and caused so much suffering. Ultimately, it was the willingness of the representatives of Northern Ireland's political parties to adhere to the principles of non-violence that helped create an atmosphere that led to this most historic agreement.

I commend all those who helped lay the groundwork for this achievement: Prime Minister Tony Blair, Prime Min-

ister Bertie Ahern and President Clinton for their dedication to the peace process. And I am especially proud of my former colleague, Senator George Mitchell, for his patient and herculean efforts to heal the deep wounds of this tragic conflict.

It will come as no surprise to my fellow Mainers and my Senate colleagues that Senator Mitchell would be unduly modest in recognizing the role he has played. As he noted, it may be true that the agreement alone "guarantees nothing." But it does bestow the precious gift of hope upon a people who finally have "the chance for a better future."

In his quiet, understated way, George Mitchell brought individuals who had been in conflict for the past thirty years out of the shadows of distrust and into the light of faith—faith in a nonviolent, democratic resolution. As one of the participants in the talks commented, "Here the United States sent one of its most able, skilled, talented, humble politicians, a supreme diplomat, and frankly we didn't deserve him."

That is a poignant and appropriate tribute to a man who has helped bring the promise of peace to a region most deserving of its blessings. As one who served with him in the Congress for nearly 15 years, I am proud to extend my gratitude to Senator Mitchell for his extraordinary work. And I do so knowing that the honor which would please George Mitchell most would be the true and lasting success of the remarkable agreement he helped to broker.

May the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement finally bring an end to the fear and suffering, and may the future of Northern Ireland be as bright as the spirit and potential of her extraordinary people.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, it was Samuel Johnson who said in 1777 that the knowledge that you will be hanged in a fortnight does wonders to concentrate your mind. In 1998, former Senate Majority Leader and Maine Senator George Mitchell proved the truth of this aphorism by giving the Northern Ireland peace talks a deadline, placing upon these negotiations the equivalent, if you will, of a "sunset" provision that left the parties no alternative but finally to come up with a real solution.

This deadline accomplished its purpose: it concentrated their minds wonderfully, and this led directly to the historic Stormont Agreement. Some years ago it scarcely seemed possible to imagine a Northern Ireland in which children could grow up without fear of sectarian violence and bloodshed. Today, however, this brighter future is not only imaginable—it is very nearly here.

That Senator Mitchell should possess such statesmanship and political acumen is, of course, no surprise in my home state of Maine. Senator Mitchell is greatly admired in this country for

his work on behalf of Maine and on behalf of all Americans. Today, however, the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland—and peace-loving people everywhere—also owe Senator Mitchell a great debt for helping steer these talks to their successful conclusion.

It is my great hope that with his statesmanship and steady hand, Senator Mitchell has now made it possible to achieve a real reconciliation in Northern Ireland—and for the Irish people to go about building their future together, in cooperation rather than in conflict.

And I am very pleased that the Senate tonight will pass legislation expressing our support for the Irish peace process and the brighter future represented by the Stormont Agreement.

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I am proud to join my colleagues in the United States Senate in congratulating the people of Northern Ireland for their tremendous courage and perseverance which allowed for the signing of the historic peace agreement. With continued political leadership and the inspiring dedication of the Northern Ireland people, I am optimistic that peace may be at hand.

I traveled to Northern Ireland this past January. In fact, I arrived on the date that the latest initiative which led to the peace agreement arrived: January 12. During three days there, as the parties reviewed the details and held discussions with their constituencies, I developed a deep admiration for the political leaders who eventually accepted this agreement.

The concurrent resolution which we are submitting today seeks to thank all of the people who contributed to this peace agreement; I wish to personally thank all of the people who spent time listening to and talking with me.

Mr. President, I learned a great deal about politics and courage from the representatives of the political parties in Northern Ireland. I found that politicians in Northern Ireland share many of the challenges that politicians face in the United States Senate. Specifically, they often spend hours of each day in very difficult negotiations which may result in dramatic changes in the lives of those they represent. Following these meetings, they face their constituencies and justify their actions. The difference, however, between our jobs and theirs lies in the stakes. These people literally risked their lives by engaging in the peace process; they risked their lives to endorse this agreement; and they continue to bear this risk as the process continues.

Mr. President, the American people recognize the incredible risks these leaders take, and we thank them. To these brave men and women, however, the reward diminishes the risk. If this agreement succeeds as planned, it may alter the course of history. Because of this brave sacrifice, the people of Northern Ireland have the promise of

security, freedom, prosperity and an end to indiscriminate killings and terrorist acts.

Mr. President, our concurrent resolution thanks a lot of people. But for me, the most inspiring people I met were outside of Belfast. The role of the community leaders cannot be overemphasized. While the negotiations proceeded in Belfast, at homes, neighborhoods and towns across the region, people were building local relationships which crossed borders and communities. These are the true heroes of the peace process. The people I met are making changes and making a difference where they live. They support the political process, but were not waiting around for anything coming from the capitals. Spending time among the people in the border regions, with the strongest faith in their abilities to make a difference in their own towns and neighborhoods, I became convinced that peace had a chance in Northern Ireland.

I salute all of the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland today who have labored for peace. They are the driving force behind the peace process, and they will make it work.

Mr. LOTT. I have a few remarks I would like to make on this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I thank Senators KENNEDY and DODD for their comments. I thought it appropriate today, without another day going by, that the U.S. Senate express itself on this very important issue on behalf of the American people. That is why we made sure that we brought it up and had these few minutes to discuss this resolution, and that we put on the Record our salutations to those who have been involved in these negotiations. We offer our congratulations to all the participants in the negotiations. I think they deserve recognition for their willingness to make honorable compromises in order to reach this agreement.

I think particular credit goes to our former colleague, Senator George Mitchell, for his persistence and his doggedness. Frankly, I wasn't sure that it could be pulled off, but he stayed with it. I think we owe him a debt of gratitude for his work.

Also, of course, I commend Prime Minister Tony Blair and Taoiseach Bertie Ahearn for their involvement and leadership. I believe the American people are proud of the contributions the United States and our President have made to this effort. We hope it will lead to approval in the May 22 referendums. Most of all, we hope it will lead to a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. That is the desire and that is the prayer of the people in Northern Ireland, in America and, hopefully, throughout the world. I endorse this resolution.

I have no further request for time. I am prepared to yield back the remainder of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, Senator DASCHLE and I have been communicating. We do have an agreement we think is a fair way to conclude the debate on the education bill and also an agreement with regard to how the State Department reorganization conference report will be considered.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Coverdell A+ education bill be advanced to third reading and that there be 3 hours 40 minutes of remaining debate time, to be equally divided in the usual form; and that following the conclusion or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to a vote on passage of the Coverdell A+ bill.

I am hoping that Senators have had an opportunity to say what they need to say on this. Those who want to make closing remarks will be free to do so under this agreement, but it would be all right with the majority leader and the Senate if we did not have to use the full 3 hours 40 minutes. At that time, we will have a recorded vote, if this agreement is entered into, on the education bill, followed by a vote on the Irish resolution.

I further ask unanimous consent that at 10 a.m. on Friday, the Senate begin consideration of the conference report to accompany the State Department reorganization bill under the consent agreement of March 31, and that the vote occur on adoption of the conference report at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 27, with 10 minutes of debate remaining for closing remarks to be equally divided just prior to the vote.

I further ask unanimous consent that when the Senate reconvenes on Monday, April 27, following morning business, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the NATO enlargement treaty.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, we will have two votes back to back around, I presume, 7:30, hopefully. Then we will have the State Department reorganization debate on Friday, with no recorded votes. The next recorded vote after tonight will be at 5:30 p.m. on Monday. We will have no other subject debated on Monday other than NATO enlargement. We will stay on NATO enlargement until Senators feel they are prepared to vote. Hopefully, by having that debate Monday and votes on amendments perhaps on Tuesday and Wednesday, we can come to a conclusion on Wednesday, but we will not hurry this most important issue and deliberation of the Senate with regard to the NATO enlargement treaty.

Therefore, that will be the schedule for the remainder of this week and through some part of Wednesday of next week.

I yield the floor, and we can now begin the debate.

#### EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the order just stated, the Senate will now resume discussion and debate of H.R. 2646.

Under the previous order, the question is on the engrossment of the amendments and third reading of the bill.

The amendments were ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read a third time.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from the great State of California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I have not had an opportunity to speak on this bill. I take this opportunity to do so now.

Prior to yesterday, it was my full intention to vote for this bill. After yesterday, I regret to say I have some serious problems with it and cannot vote for it at this time, but I will, if the problems are remedied, vote for this bill when it comes out of conference.

Let me speak just briefly about what the problems are and then why I think the Coverdell-Torricelli bill is so important and groundbreaking.

Yesterday, this body accepted on a 50-to-49 vote an amendment to convert over \$10 billion in currently targeted Federal education funds to a block grant to States. With adoption of this amendment, our efforts to direct limited Federal funds to national priorities are obliterated. Funds for disadvantaged students, funds to make schools safe and drug-free, funds for meeting national student achievement goals—virtually gone.

For ESEA Title I, the bill as it now stands deletes important requirements:

Requirements for student performance standards and assessment, something that I believe is vital if we are going to change the downward trend of public education in this country.

Requirements for evaluating a program's effectiveness. How could someone oppose that?

Requirements to take corrective action if programs are not effective. You mean, don't change a program if you find out it is not effective?

And requirements that Federal funds not supplant State and local funds. That was the Gorton amendment.

Secondly, that same day the Senate adopted, on a 52-47 vote, an amendment which would prohibit voluntary national testing of students. Last year, this body worked out a bipartisan compromise on reading and math testing